

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 107987

FOLL REPEAT STATE 107987 ACTION SOFIA 08 MAY 75:

QUOTE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CGEN, EEWT, BU, LE

SUBJECT: DETENTION OF ABBOTT LABORATORIES' EMPLOYEE

REF: STATE 102961

1. COUNSEL FOR ABBOTT LABORATORIES HAS PROVIDED FURTHER INFORMATION ON CASE OF HAGOP S. ISPENTCHIAN. PHARMAKHIM, BULGARIAN COMPANY WITH WHOM ABBOTT HAS CONTRACT, ARRANGED FOR ABBOTT EMPLOYEE TO SEE INVESTIGATING OFFICER IN SOFIA. HE REPORTED THAT CHARGE AGAINST ISPENTCHIAN HAD NOT BEEN FILED OR STATED, BULGARIAN INVESTIGATOR HAD SAID THERE NO REQUIREMENT FOR CHARGE TO BE FILED FOR S-X MONTHS. APPARENTLY, BULGARIANS ALLEGING BRIBES HAVE BEEN PAID TO INCREASE QUANTITY OF BULGARIAN PURCHASES OF ABBOTT FINISHED PRODUCTS INCLUDED IN EXTENSIVE COOPERATIVE DEAL NOW UNDER NEGOTIATION. INVESTIGATOR INSISTED HE HAD SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO CONVICT BUT PROCEEDED TO DEMAND CERTAIN "DOCUMENTATION" EXISTING IN BRUSSELS
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OFFICE. COUNSEL DISCLAIMED EXISTENCE OF, OR FURTHER

ABBOTT OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE THIS "DOCUMENTATION."
ABBOTT ATTEMPTING TO GET LEBANESE PRESIDENT TO CALL IN
BULGARIAN AMBASSADOR AND ASK FOR FACTS IN CASE BUT NOT
OPTIMISTIC THIS WILL WORK OR THAT THEY HAVE ANY MEANS
TO ESTABLISH CONTACT WITH ISPENTCHIAN OR ASCERTAIN HOW
HE IS BEING TREATED. (COUNSEL REPORTED THAT ISPENTCHIAN

HAD BEEN HELD UNDER HOUSE ARREST LAST FEBRUARY, QUES-
TIONED SEVERAL TIMES IN FOUR DAY PERIOD BUT MATTER
SUBSEQUENTLY CLEARED UP.)

2. ABBOTT COUNSEL STATED THAT COMPANY RIGHT NOW IN
MIDDLE OF NEGOTIATIONS OF SUBSTANTIAL DEAL WHICH WOULD
YIELD POSSIBLE U.S. PURCHASES FROM BULGARIA IN 1980 OF
AROUND 2.75 MILLION DOLLARS PLUS UNKNOWN POSSIBLE
BULGARIAN SALES TO USSR AND GDR. SOME EQUIPMENT HAS
ALREADY BEEN SENT TO BULGARIA; ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT
NOW IN BELGIUM AWAITING SHIPMENT AND NOW TIMELY TO SEND
TECHNICIAN TO EFFECT INSTALLATION. COUNSEL AND ABBOTT
EXECUTIVE EXPRESS CONFIDENCE ISPENTCHIAN NOT INVOLVED
IN ANY MAJOR IRREGULARITY AND IN ANY CASE ARE OUTRAGED
AT BULGARIAN LEGAL PROCEDURES AND LACK OF CLEAR LEGAL
ISSUE. THEY INDICATED STRONGLY THAT THEY WOULD BE MOST
HESITANT TO CONTINUE TO SEND EMPLOYEES INTO BULGARIA
UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND EXPRESSED READINESS
TO WITHDRAW FROM FURTHER NEGOTIATION OF CURRENT DEAL
NOTED ABOVE. THEY FELT THAT THEIR POSITION SHOULD BE
KNOWN TO BULGARIANS. FOLLOWING OUR SUGGESTION THEY
WILL BE CONTACTING BULGARIAN EMBASSY HERE IN EFFORT
TO ELICIT INFORMATION AND CONVEY THEIR VIEWS.

3. UNLESS EMBASSY PERCEIVES OBJECTION, YOU SHOULD SEEK
APPOINTMENT WITH MINFORTRADE OFFICIAL LIKELY TO BE
COGNIZANT OF ABBOTT NEGOTIATIONS AND OF SUFFICIENT
RANK TO TAKE ACTION IF SO DISPOSED AND INFORM HIM OF
SITUATION. YOU CAN CONVEY ABBOTT POSSIBLE RELUCTANCE
TO CONTINUE DOING BUSINESS IN BULGARIA IF THEY ARE
UNABLE TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER THEIR REPRESENTATIVE BEING
DEALT WITH FAIRLY. YOU WILL WISH TO MAKE CLEAR THAT
WE ARE AWARE ISPENTCHIAN NOT AMERICAN CITIZEN BUT THAT
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TREATMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES OF AMERICAN COMPANY IS
LEGITIMATE CONCERN OF BOTH US AND BULGARIA IN VIEW
OUR COMMON INTEREST IN PROMOTING ECONOMIC RELATIONS.
PURPOSE OF YOUR REPRESENTATION IS, OF COURSE, TO
ENLIST MINFORTRADE INTEREST IN COMMERCIAL ASPECTS OF
SITUATION IN ORDER TO SEEK INFORMATION AND POSSIBILITY
OF EQUITABLE DISPOSITION OF CASE FROM POLICE AGENCIES.
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